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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 000207

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PARL PREL PGOV DOE KNNP GG

SUBJECT: GEORGIA: BORDER CONTROL CHANGES WORRY

INTERNATIONAL DONORS

REF: TBILISI 2107

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Kent Logsdon for reasons 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary and comment. Organizational changes within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) effective January 1, specifically in the Border Police and Patrol Police, have changed operations at Georgia's ports of entry. Previously, the Border Police controlled operations and passenger processing at all ports of entry and along the "green" border. Under the reorganization, which took effect on January 1, the Patrol Police will now be responsible for functions at the ports of entry. The Border Police retained control of the green borders and the Coast Guard for the open waters. Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Eke Zguladze assured DCM that the reorganization was part of a management decision to improve the efficiency of border post operations and to combat corruption with Border Patrol ranks. However, the transition has been disorganized and poorly executed. Although there were reports of individuals at the border posts being interviewed in order to retain their jobs, Zguladze insisted that the vast majority of the Border Police officers trained over the years with USG assistance will remain at their posts, and simply be transferred to the Patrol Police. Emboffs will continue to monitor these changes closely to ensure that the transfer of functional responsibility at the ports of entry does not impair operations, especially given the substantial U.S. investment in training border personnel and providing equipment. In one case, Emboffs learned that portal monitors at some ports of entry are not being used. End Summary and comment.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

¶2. (U) As of January 1, the oversight of operations and passenger processing at the ports of entry were transferred from the Border Police to the Patrol Police. The Border Police aviation unit was transferred to the Ministry of Defense, but airborne assistance will be furnished by the MoD in response to specific requests for support by the Patrol Police. In addition, the Border Police rapid response unit was disbanded. The Border Police Command and Control Center (C3) was restructured into two units directly under the MOIA: the Operational Management and Border Technology Center in the Operational Technical Department, and the Operational Support Office in the Information Analytical Department. These units manage the maintenance of the technical systems at the borders and service all of the border agencies. The Georgian Navy has been dissolved and is in the process of being integrated into the Coast Guard, which remains a law enforcement agency within the Border Police, but it is now only in charge of open water operations. The Police Academy will be responsible for training all of the officers working at the border crossings; the maritime academy in Batumi will

provide training for the Coast Guard. The Police Academy plans to add five full-time instructors and fifteen contractors to their current staff in order to meet the additional requirements resulting from the reorganization. The Government of Georgia stated that the reorganization was necessary to increase transparency of the Border Police and decrease incidents of corruption at the borders; the government has already credited the reorganization with success in the latter. Just one week after the transfer of responsibilities took place, the press reported on the arrests of three individuals who attempted to bribe officers at the borders.

RESULTS ACHIEVED WITH THE HELP OF US ASSISTANCE

¶3. (C) Through the Georgian Border Security and Law Enforcement (GBSLE), Export Control and Related Border Service (EXBS), and Second Line of Defense (SLD) programs, the U.S. government has enhanced Georgian border security by providing extensive advisory support, training, infrastructure, equipment, and other assets to Georgian border agencies. The training and equipment enabled the Border Police to operate and maintain communications and border data management systems and radiation portal monitors and related equipment; to identify and interdict dual-use, special nuclear and other radioactive materials; and to perform effective inspections on vehicles and cargo arriving at air, land, and sea ports of entry.

¶4. (C) Because we have a robust program of support and cooperation planned for 2009, DCM called on Deputy Minister

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of Internal Affairs Eke Zguladze January 22 to ask for additional information about the planned reorganization. Zguladze, accompanied by Police Academy Director Khatia Dekanoidze, assured the DCM that the changes were part of a management plan to break up the inefficient Border Police by transferring some of its functions to the Patrol Police. Zguladze also noted that the reorganization was partly intended to reduce corruption within the Border Police and said that the changes would not negatively affect working level operations. She told the DCM that the vast majority of personnel at the border check points would not lose their jobs; instead, they would simply "change uniforms" and continue to do their jobs. Zguladze said that the Patrol Police planned to retain the majority of personnel at the borders who had been trained by the USG and were experienced in using and maintaining the equipment. She appreciated our interest in ensuring that proposed training was given to the right officers and pledged to work with us to make that happen.

PROBLEMS FROM REORGANIZATION REMAIN

¶5. (C) Emboffs have had meetings with officials in the MOIA, Border Police, Patrol Police and Police Academy to understand how they plan to resolve issues related to the reorganization, but no one has been able to articulate a comprehensive strategy to deal with the concerns raised. Georgian officials have, however, expressed their desire for continued cooperation and willingness to work with the U.S.G. towards a resolution of these issues. During visits to Poti and Batumi ports and the Vale border crossing on January 26 and 27, Department of Energy (DoE)/SLD officials had a difficult time determining the extent to which previously trained officers were or were not operating at earlier installed sites. At Poti, a Coast Guard official informed the SLD team that while two officers who had been trained were transferred from the Border Police to the Patrol Police, their skill and knowledge levels were incompetent. At Vale, one person remained who had received some training in 2007, however, he admitted that he had not retained what he had learned. Encouragingly, officials with the Operational Management and Border Technology Center said they will go to

the sites to determine who needs to be trained or retrained, check on hand-held equipment availability and operability, and perform a general equipment check.

COMMENT: ADJUSTING TO THE NEW REALITY

¶6. (C) The reorganization of the MOIA and transfer of functions from the Border Police to the Patrol Police is commendable in its goal of combating corruption. However, our experts are concerned that the Patrol Police may have difficulty immediately operating and maintaining existing equipment at field locations. We are also concerned about the ability of the Police Academy to provide training to newly employed or assigned staff in the numbers necessary to maintain effective enforcement at ports of entry, given that they have not focused on border-related training programs. We will have to coordinate closely with the Ministry and the individual law enforcement agencies to ensure that our training programs are focused on the appropriate personnel and that Georgia is not vulnerable to illicit trafficking of nuclear and other radioactive material.

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LOGSDON